DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 649 FL 015 325

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TITLE Maximizing Consumer Video.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 15p.; In: Meeting the Call for Excellence in the Foreign Language Classroom. Selected papers from the 1985 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (FL 015 312).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Audiovisual Instruction; *Classroom Techniques; Computer Assisted Instruction; Instructional Materials; Material Development; *Second Language Instruction; *Student Developed Materials; Teaching Methods; *Videotape Recorders

ABSTRACT

A discussion of the use of readily-available consumer videotape recorders and recordings that second language students can either respond to or dub with their own soundtracks emphasizes the usefulness of authentic recordings not tailored for instructional use. The recordings either originate abroad or are produced by the students. The playback options available on most machines are outlined, and sources for foreign language video cassettes are suggested. Video production skills helpful in producing or using the materials, and the tools available to use with them, are also described. Commonly-found photography equipment is described, and suggestions are given for its use. The differences found in European systems and equipment are described, and methods for bridging the electronic gaps are outlined. An appendix lists sources for cassettes, services, and equipment in both the United States and Germany. (MSE)

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Maximizing Consumer Video

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While the general public enjoys video cassette recorders for recording regular television programs to watch them at a more convenient time, it may be difficult for foreign language instructors to accept the use of video materials. However, there are great possibilities for meaningful classroom activities in the target language. Anyone can use today's easy-to-operate video equipment to add a powerful component to one's repertoire of instructional strategies.

Even when the material is in English anyone can play the VCR with the sound turned off, so that students can be encouraged to react orally to the visual sequences presented. On some VCRs you can push a button called *audio dub* in order to record student responses over a mike without disturbing the original video footage. This will result in a new video cassette consisting of the original video track and your own audio track in whatever language you choose.

This article will present various proficiency based playback techniques and their integration into the teaching process, sources for prerecorded video cassettes in languages other than English, simple production techniques, domestic equipment, the problems encountered with European tapes and equipment, specialized equipment bridging the gap, the relative popularity of various formats and brands, and finally specific purchase recommendations.

It should be emphasized that this article is based upon a strong belief that using authentic, non-tailored video materials will increase any student's ability to communicate in the foreign language. Authentic, non-tailored materials are defined here as either foreign language materials originating abroad, or produced impromptu by learners of a foreign language, as for example, in a video letter.

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Playback Options

1. *Complete Playback*. Show the entire foreign language video cassette from beginning to end, perhaps even over two class periods when dealing with a longer film. This is perhaps best reserved as an out-of-class assignment with oral reports in answer to very specific questions.

2. *Excerpt Playback*. Preview and show only applicable and stimulating segments, especially when attempting to stimulate oral communication rather than a written report. Do not supply all vocabulary and/or answers, so that students are stimulated to ask questions when confronted with the unknown. It may be better to have students interact orally with you and/or with each other rather than to send them home with complete vocabulary and grammar lists. Foreign commercials are very suitable even from the very beginning of foreign language instruction, at which level it is best not to force students to understand and use every last detail. Let students enjoy discovery and let them pick out what they recognize, perhaps only single words at first, a complete sentence, a question, or a longer description. A commercial could also be used to teach students to support an opinion or speculate on a product's merits.

3. *Playback without Sound*. Again short segments are used to stimulate oral production, but without a sound track. This task is harder, since the student cannot recycle any utterances other than those that you may have provided. Be patient and accept what students provide eagerly. The time for correction is during the drill or acquisition phase and not when you are testing or promoting oral proficiency. Take note of errors and correct later.

4. *Enhanced Playback Utilizing Special Effects*. An activity, object, or sign can be looked at more closely by pressing *pause* in order to obtain a *freeze frame* that can be studied in detail. You may also wish to search for a visual sequence worth reviewing. This can be done by pressing the appropriate *visual search control*, which scans visually what is on the cassette.

5. *Other Playback Option*. Have students tell you what sequence they want to see, which segments they want in *freeze frame*, which in *visual search*. It's good practice, and it's never boring, because students are motivated when pursuing their own goals.

Sources for Foriegn Language Video Cassettes

1. The local video rental club may carry a few titles in French, Spanish or German (e.g., Z in French on CD-video disc, *Robin Hood* in a bilingual English/Spanish version on CD-video disc, and *Fitzcaraldo* in German on VHS cassette).

   Note: video disc players, CD or laser type, are simple playback devices not unlike record players, except that images and sound are reproduced on a regular TV. Players range from $250.00 to $800.00 and discs start at about $20.00.
2. Domestic magazines such as *Video Review* and *Video* may list various sources for foreign language video cassettes like *Survival Spanish* from Language Plus.
3. Non-profit cultural institutes and foreign consulates may have extensive rental libraries.
4. Commercial outlets like the German Language Video Center or Polyglot Productions may offer foreign language video cassettes for sale.
5. Overseas sources can be found in magazines such as the German *Video* magazine. Others are listed in the appendix. Please note that VHS cassettes ordered from overseas may require expensive conversion or special playback equipment as listed elsewhere in this article.
6. Friends, relatives, or even acquaintances overseas may prove to be invaluable sources for prerecorded video cassettes. They can expedite the purchase and mailing of foreign language video cassettes sold overseas. Again, video cassettes obtained from overseas require special playback equipment.
7. Perhaps the most unique source could be a cooperating school in Europe interested in establishing a regular video letter exchange with your school. The whole idea is that students in the U.S. communicate with students abroad. This entails self-made cassettes. Students are encouraged to use the foreign language, but one's native tongue is welcomed by those participants to whom it is a foreign language.

Further information regarding video letter exchanges can be obtained from Dr. Alan Soffin at Temple University, or Kark-Ludwig J Konrad, at Eastern Illinois University (see appendix for addresses).

A video letter exchange program will not ony provide access to personalized foreign language cassettes from Europe, but will also motivate your students to communicate with their friends abroad.

Video letter exchanges, however, require a special portable VCR and camera if costly conversion equipment ($30,000) and/or conversion services ($3.50 per minute) are to be avoided.

Video Production Skills

1. *Audio Dub*. We are often confronted with video footage unsuitable in terms of the sound track. That's easy to change with a VCR with *audio dub*, which can be used to record a new audio track in the language of your choice. Any video footage, originally in the target language or not, can be changed by using the audio dub feature. With audio dub you can even shoot sequences with the mike turned off and dub in a perfect audio track later. Imagine an episode of an American soap opera with a new audio track in the target language. A sequence of spring impressions, ducks on a pond, or farm animals can receive a new soundtrack produced by instructional staff, or better yet by students. An ordinary piece of videotape can turn into dynamic interaction that is real and not contrived.

2. *Editing*. This procedure requires connecting two video recorders, one machine recording selected segments as the other played the original tape. It is easy to make a cassette containing only what is needed for a specific instructional task and avoid having to search for particular segments on a longer tape.

3. *Video Subtitles*. Video subtitles such as translations or instructions are added with a character generator. This is costly in the world of professional ¾" video, but not in the world of consumer video. Character generators sell for as little as $79.00 and can be connected to a matching camera and VCR, or may already be included on the camera your school has purchased. Make sure to read the instructions to determine if subtitles can be added in the dubbing process or only during actual recording in the field.

Anyone having mastered these skills is ready for entering the world of video photography, which allows production of original footage.

Video Photography

This level of involvement probably provides the greatest rewards, though the novice may have to read a few instructional manuals and spend a few hours with the equipment before feeling comfortable enough to begin shooting or before supervising student use of the equipment. The video novice is once again assisted by the world of consumer video, since simple and easy-to-use equipment is available. We are close to the simplicity of "point and shoot" right now.

Even if your school currently does not own the latest consumer video equipment, it is worthwhile to be informed so that you can make recommendations. Some instructors may choose to commit personal funds (taking a legitimate tax deduction as long as the equipment is used for professional purposes).

Many Americans are already recording memories of family events. Foreign language instructors can also employ easy-to-use equipment to produce video footage that can be used in the classroom or as parts of video letters to students in other countries. Many scenes recorded in "your own backyard" may help students increase their oral proficiency beyond objects and situations commonly found in a classroom.

A video letter exchange is exciting. The very same sequences function as an introduction to our country as watched by language learners abroad. Naturally you will request interviews from your exchange partners in return. Perhaps they'll show you famous buildings abroad or take you along on a field trip to significant sights like the infamous border with the GDR. The possibilities of video photography and its classroom application are endless. However, all choices of instructional video depend on access to the right kind of equipment, especially when dealing with video exchange partners in foreign countries.

Domestic Equipment

Millions of Americans are avid video fans watching programs prerecorded on one of many consumer video recorders now available to the

general public. Consumers eagerly learn a few simple instructions provided by manufacturers of video recorders. Teachers on the other hand are often reluctant to deal with video recorders, perhaps because of complications with video equipment of the professional kind: ¾" U-MATIC.

1. *Institutional Equipment*. Most public schools and institutions of higher learning use ¾" video equipment which is costly, bulky, and not as easy to use as consumer video. The matching cassettes are about the size of a book and generally not available at consumer outlets. Three-quarter-inch video cassettes are also quite a bit more expensive than cassettes for consumer equipment; they are sixty minutes in length, and unsuitable for storing longer programs like motion pictures. It is also true that older ¾" recorders cannot achieve smooth cuts between scenes when pressing the pause button. Resulting blemishes like picture break-up or video snow are removed during post-production, when the original footage is edited down to a usable length.

2. *Half-inch Consumer Video*. The world of consumer video is so much simpler that anyone should feel encouraged to take advantage of it. Half-inch video equipment is available nationwide in even the smallest of towns, and at reasonable prices. After a few minutes of introduction any child can press the record button. If there is any catch at all, it is that video recorders are sold in different configurations, i.e., different incompatible formats.

3. *Formats*. There are only three choices with regard to format:

a. BETA tape is about ½" wide and is housed in a cassette about as big as a paperback.

b. VHS tape is also ½" wide, but is housed in a cassette slightly larger than BETA.

c. VHS-C is identical to the ½" VHS tape, but is housed in a tiny cassette about the size of a bar of soap. A special VHS-C to VHS adaptor is available so that VHS-C cassettes can be recorded or played back on full size VHS decks. VHS-C cassettes are handy for video letter exchanges where weight might be an important consideration.

4. *Related Brands*. Currently about 23% of all VCRs (video recorders) sold worldwide are BETA, and 77% are VHS. Professionals have long known that VCRs are not manufactured domestically and that Sony is the standard for BETA, and both JVC and Panasonic for VHS. Model numbers for Sony, Panasonic, and JVC serve as a key to identical equipment under

brand names other than that of the original manufacturer. The following represents a list of original manufacturers and associated brands. As a rule of thumb it suffices to compare illustrations to establish the relationship between model numbers of different brands within each of the groups below, except of course, the group of unrelated brands.

a. Panasonic VHS recorders are sold under the names Quasar, Magnavox, Sylvania, GE, Philco, Curtis Mathes, J.C. Penney, Olympus, and Canon in the U.S., and Bosch-Bauer, Blaupunkt, Grundig (VHS portable only), Olympus, and Canon in Europe.

b. JVC VHS recorders are sold under the names Kenwood, Sansui and Zenith in the U.S., and Dual, Graetz, Grundig, ITT, Normende, Saba, Sansui Telefunken, Thompson and Uher in Europe.

c. Hitachi VHS recorders are sold under the names RCA, Minolta and Pentax.

d. Unrelated brands of VHS recorders are Akai, NEC, Mitsubishi, Sanyo, Sharp and Sears (U.S. only).

e. BETA recorders are sold under the names Sony, Aiwa, NEC, Sears (U.S. only), Toshiba and Wega (Europe only).

While this list is current, it is expected to change as loyalties change, and as products from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Korea enter the market.

5. *Recording Speeds*. Consumer recorders of either format BETA or VHS offer a choice of several recording speeds that allow squeezing 3 or more feature length motion pictures onto a single $10.00 cassette. For the best results, choose the fastest recording speed. The recording speeds for BETA and VHS recorders differ, and professional recorders generally only offer the fastest recording speed, which is about two hours for a VHS T-120 cassette.

Equipment Categories

The following guide to equipment is arranged according to the relative usefulness of each item with reference to a specific application. Specific brands and model numbers are indicated for the video novice.

1. *Table top VCRs* are offered by every company selling VCRs. They generally range in price from about $300.00 to about $1,000.00. Budget models are intended for home use and are not recommended for the

foreign language classroom. Instructional use generally requires VCRs with picture perfect freeze frame, picture scan, and audio dub. The choice between BETA and VHS, or between consumer VHS and industrial VHS is irrelevant as long as cassette interface between different departments, schools, or countries is not an issue. It is easier to interchange VHS cassettes because more VHS recorders have been sold already. Table top VCRs are generally useful for indoor playback or indoor productions because they depend on the availability of a 110-volt outlet. Table top VCRs also require a special AC camera power supply, unless it is a Panasonic PV-1730, which offers a convenient camera input for almost any brand VHS camera.

2. *Portable VCRs* are sold by all companies, but often in configurations not suitable for use in foreign language instruction.

Lower priced models do not offer audio dub, clear freeze frame, or useable picture scan. The new expensive Hi-Fi models, on the other hand, lack audio dub for technical reasons. Many portables are limited in the way they can be powered, or in providing sufficient recording time from a single rechargeable battery.

Anyone searching for a high quality portable at reasonable cost should take a closer look at the following models by Panasonic or related brands:

a. The consumer model PV-8110 (Stereo model without tuner)

b. The industrial equivalent AG-2400 (Mono model without tuner)

Both are sold without a tuner, but a universal power supply that works in Europe. However only its European cousin NV-180 is able to record off-the-air in Europe.

Recorders like the NV-180 are for anyone interested in importing cassettes from Europe (see European Video Gap below). It should be noted that the NV-180 is sold in this country, but only with a 220-volt tuner/power supply. Since it is a Panasonic, it is quite easy to find the 110-volt counterpart to begin playback or record sessions with the foreign recorder.

3. *Camera recorders* are sold in both formats and weigh about 5 pounds. One is called BETA Movie, the other Video Movie. BETA Movie uses conventional BETA cassettes, but lacks in-the-field playback. Video Movie allows playback in the field, but is limited to 20 minutes recording time because it uses smaller VHS-C cassettes.

The European Video Gap

Europeans enjoy video recorders as millions of Americans do. They have the same formats VHS and BETA, as well as all the major brands offered in the United States. However, there are great differences that stand in the way of a free exchange of materials or equipment.

Most people know about voltage differences between Europe and the United States, but with video there are also different recording speeds. A VHS T-120 is called an E-180 in Europe, even though both are of equal length. Either cassette will result in two hours recording time on a domestic recorder, and three hours on a European recorder.

Europeans also encode video signals differently for broadcast purposes which affects both TV tuners and VCR tuners. The following groupings are important in recording or playing back foreign video signals.

1. In the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Japan, video signals are encoded in NTSC.
2. In Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Spain video signals are encoded in PAL B/G.
3. In Great Britain and Hong Kong, video signals are encoded in PAL I. (Some PAL B/G recorders allow PAL I playback, but not recording of PAL I.)
4. In France alone video signals are encoded in SECAM L.
5. In the entire Mideast, video signals are encoded in SECAM B/G, often called MESECAM, or SECAM OCIR.
6. In the entire East Block, video signals are encoded predominantly in SECAM D/K.

Therefore cassettes imported from abroad will not play back unless the equipment is designed for the right encoding system or standard. Different broadcast standards apply in different countries. Importing foreign standard equipment, other than portable battery-operated equipment, is not practical and generally poses problems of voltage compatibility.

The ideal solution would be television sets and VCRs that can decode video signals of any standard. While the industry is moving in that direction, we are at least several years away from such realities. For right now we must depend on either costly conversion services at $3.50 per minute, or the few pieces of specialized consumer equipment that allow bridging the gap.

Bridging the European Gap

The following sections list specialized equipment allowing playback or recording of video cassettes in standards other than our domestic NTSC. Such equipment is available only from a handful of sources (see appendix) and often only in limited numbers, with prices dependent on exchange rates and availability. References to specific model numbers are always indicated in brackets with the foreign standard spelled out.

1. Video cameras are produced as single standard equipment, i.e., PAL cameras will work only with PAL VCRs, SECAM cameras with SECAM VCRs and NTSC cameras with NTSC VCRs. Multistandard cameras are not available.
2. Video recorders on the other hand are available in different configurations:
   a. Single standard VCRs are intended for use in specific regions of the world. Those manufactured for the U.S. are all NTSC and require 110 line voltage. Others are manufactured for other regions of the world. Those with switchable line voltage from 90 to 240 volts can be used in the U.S. if connected to a multistandard TV (see c. below).
   b. Image translator VCRs are regular NTSC VCRs that have been modified to allow the normal NTSC record/playback use, as well as PAL or SECAM playback in conjunction with any NTSC monitor. However, it should be stressed that color, tint, and vertical hold adjustment are required at the TV.
   c. Tri-standard or Multistandard VCRs generally allow reception and recording of PAL B/G and SECAM B/G (Mideast, not France) as well as playback in NTSC, and sometimes recording (but not reception) of NTSC and playback of SECAM L (France). Only very few models have been imported from the Mideast to the U.S. and intended purchase should always be preceded by consultation with knowledgeable professionals, often not including sales staff. The appendix does include a few sources for such equipment. Recommended brands include: JVC (PAL, SECAM B/G, NTSC: HR-7600), Hitachi (10-STANDARD VT-39-EM), Akai (PAL, SECAM L, SECAM B/G, and NTSC:

VS-2-ECN, or newer model). Note: Tri-standard or multistandard VCRs require a matching TV, and are generally equipped with either a manually or automatically switchable line voltage input. However, do read the instructions before plugging one in.

d. Anyone contemplating video productions depending on portability must choose a single-standard portable. Currently the best choice for PAL B/G is an NV-180 by Panasonic (similar to NTSC AG-2400 by Panasonic). The NV-180 will record and play back in PAL and generally requires a PAL or multistandard TV for full color playback. Curiously enough black and white playback from this PAL portable can be achieved on a regular NTSC monitor (not TV) after adjusting the vertical hold control.

Anyone contemplating video cassette production for both classroom use and video letter exchanges should seriously consider the purchase of an NV-180 PAL Portable, a PAL Camera and a multistandard monitor, which total somewhat above $2,000 depending on camera choice and the size of the picture tube on the TV.

A SECAM model of the Panasonic NV-180 should be available in France, but the PAL version of the NV-180 will play in black and white on any SECAM TV/VCR combination, and SECAM cassettes received from France will play back in black and white on any PAL TV/VCR combination.

3. Tri-standard or multistandard TVs and/or monitors are becoming more available for anywhere from $350.00 to $950.00. Recommended brands are JVC (Av-20-ME), Hitachi (8-Standard: CMT 2063), Sharp (7-Standard: DV-1400-SPN, DV-1600-SPN, and DV-2100-SPN), and Toshiba (219-X-3-M), as well as Sony. See appendix for sources. Note: Most newer models sense line voltage requirements automatically, but still, read the instructions first.

There may be many facts to consider, but basically it's all pretty simple since a multistandard TV is just about the same price as a domestic single standard NTSC TV. Even a complete video system of the European

kind consisting of a camera, a portable VCR, a monitor and table top VCR for dubbing costs no more than the equivalent domestic system. All multistandard equipment can be used for conventional reception, playback or recording.

It's time we spoke up and asked for equipment that will enhance foreign language instruction. Even when funds are scarce it makes more sense to buy multistandard equipment that meets our requirements, as well as those of other departments.

Alternate ways of financing equipment that helps our students build their oral proficiency are fundraising through candy sales or even the personal purchase of multistandard equipment. After all, it can be used at home like any other conventional domestic equipment and has the advantage of access to Europe by video cassettes. The initial effort of fundraising or personal expenses is far outweighed by the eventual professional benefits. I hope to encourage strongly interested foreign language instructors to take up the challenge by pursuing the benefits of consumer video. It only takes genuine interest, perseverance, and knowing where to turn when advice is needed. And by the way, next time you hear of someone returning from Europe and blaming the X-ray for damaging all those wonderful cassettes that simply don't play back at home, please acquaint them with your findings about consumer video.

Appendix

List of Sources for Cassettes, Services and Equipment

1 Goethe Institute Chicago German Cultural Center 401 North Michigan Avenue Chicago, IL 60611 (312) 329-0915	¾" NTSC cassettes in German or English, some with subtitles. ½" NTSC availability planned. Both PAL and NTSC listings are available. Call or write for catalog and rental policies
2 German Language Video Center Div. of Heidelberg Haus 7625-27 Pendleton Pike Indianapolis, IN 46226	½" NTSC and PAL cassettes for sale. Catalog available upon request. Also sells image translator VCR
3 Language Plus 4105 Rio Bravo El Paso, Texas 79902 (915) 544-8600	½" NTSC instructional cassette entitled *Survival Spanish*
4 Vereinigte Motor Verlage Abteilung Vertrieb Postfach 1042 7000 Stuttgart 1 West Germany	Contact for subscription to *Video*, a monthly magazine in German with excellent articles regarding consumer video, as well as a listing of sources for equipment and original PAL cassettes

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5 Tele Video Ossa Basler Strasse 4 7800 Freiburg West Germany	PAL cassette rental and sales, including overseas. Contact for conditions and cost.
6 Video City Am Hauptbahnhof 16 6000 Frankfurt 1 West Germany	PAL cassette rental and sales. PAL and multistandard VCR and TV sales. Contact for sales conditions. Will send via Air Freight. May accept Visa. Check with U.S. Customs about import duties.
7 Hoffman Video/Radio/Hi-Fi Kaiserstrasse 57 6000 Frankfurt 1 West Germany	PAL and multistandard VCR and TV sales. Excellent selection. Contact for conditions of sale and shipping. May accept Visa. Check with U.S. Customs about duties.
8 International Ad Conversion 200 West 58th Street New York, NY 10019	Lowest commercial price for conversion: $3.50 per minute.
9 Institute for Video Exchange Gladfelter Hall, Room 629 Temple University 12th Street at Norris Philadelphia, PA 19122 Attn: Dr. Alan Soffin (215) 787-7238	Institutional conversion service in connection with video letter exchanges. Contact Dr. Soffin for conditions of services offered. Conversion fee: $15.00 per each 30 minutes. Note: Ideally a video letter should not exceed 30 minutes. (Also: request $25.00 cassette on video letter exchange.)
10 Merlin Engineering Works 1880 Embarcadero Palo Alto, CA 94303 (800) 227-1980 or (415) 856-0900 (collect)	Digital standards converter at less than $35,000.00, which is considered reasonable by today's standards.
11 Karl-Ludwig J. Konrad Foreign Languages, EIU Charleston, IL 61920 (217) 581-3224 (office) 581-3021 (Dept.)	University video consultant with respect to equipment selection, equipment availability, equipment specs. Will assist any interested instructors in building a video letter exchange program and connected equipment choices. Specs and literature available upon request.
12 Cartridge King 625 West End Avenue New York, NY 10025 Attn: Sam Fuhrer (212) 749-0961	Multistandard VCR and TV sales. Excellent, competent advice and speedy delivery of merchandise. Some service manuals available upon request.
13 Focus Camera 4523 13th Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11219 (212) 871-7600 (information) (800) 223-3411 (ordering)	Limited multistandard VCR and TV sales. Typical competitive mail order.
14 ABC International Traders 216 S. Oxford Ave. P.O. Box 74917 Los Angeles, CA 90004 (213) 380-4030 (800) 222-4685	Distributorship for electronic equipment. Will not ship to individuals. Selection includes lower prices, quality models.
15 Video Central Inc. 460 Seventh Avenue New York, NY 10001 (212) 947-6960	Newest source for multistandard VCRs and TVs.

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16 Lincoln Export
6617 North Clark
Chicago, IL 60657
(312) 764-1497

Retail outlet for 110-220-volt overseas products ranging from housewares to video Ask for Syed Mohiuddin with regard to PAL/SECAM

17 Tri State Camera
106 Broadway
New York, NY 10038
(212) 349-2555
(800) 221-1926

Retail outlet advertising in *Popular Photography & Video Review* 24 hour shipping, MasterCard, Visa and COD Will research specific questions about PAL/SECAM equipment

18 Polyglot Productions
P O Box 666
Cambridge, MA 02238
(617) 491-3541

Reasonably priced VHS or BETA cassettes of original motion pictures in many languages, often with subtitles

19 Teacher's Discovery
Division of American Eagle Co
1130 E Big Beaver Road
Troy, MI 48083-1977
(800) 521-3897
(313) 689-9458 (call collect)

VHS travelogue programs in English and Spanish about Spain, Germany, Austria and France (Paris)

20 Miami-Dade Community College
Product Development & Distribution
11011 S W 104th Street
Miami, FL 33176
(305) 596-1364

Original *Survival Spanish* video program package, complete 30 video programs, text/workbook, 4 pronunciation audio cassettes, and scripts

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